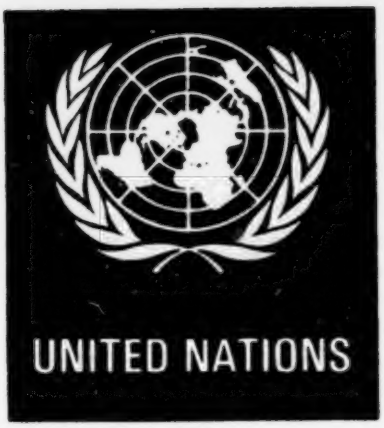

DIVISION FOR
PALESTINIAN RIGHTS

UNITED NATIONS NGO MEETING IN SOLIDARITY WITH THE PALESTINIAN PEOPLE

Nicosia
18 April 2002

02-48291

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I. Introduction

1. The United Nations NGO Meeting in Solidarity with the Palestinian People was held in Nicosia, on 18 April 2002, under the auspices of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People and in accordance with the provisions of General Assembly resolutions 56/33 and 56/34 of 3 December 2001. The NGO Meeting immediately followed the International Meeting in Support of Middle East Peace that was held at the same venue, on 16 and 17 April 2002.

2. The Committee was represented by a delegation comprising Amb. Bruno Eduardo Rodríguez Parrilla (Cuba), Vice-Chairman of the Committee; Amb. Ravan A.G. Farhâdi (Afghanistan), Vice-Chairman of the Committee; and Amb. Sotirios Zackheos (Cyprus).

3. After the opening statement by Amb. Ravan A.G. Farhâdi, Vice-Chairman of the Committee, the Meeting was chaired by Mr. Don Betz, Chairman of the International Coordinating Committee for NGOs on the Question of Palestine (ICCP), and Mr. Theocharis Papamagaris, Vice-Chairman of the European Coordinating Committee for NGOs on the Question of Palestine (ECCP).

4. Presentations were made by six experts. Mr. Issam Younis, General Director of Al Mezan Centre for Human Rights, who had been invited to speak in Plenary I, was not able to participate in the Meeting due to Israeli travel restrictions. Also, a number of NGOs from the Occupied Palestinian Territory were not able to travel to Nicosia. Moreover, Mr. Adam Keller, Spokesperson for Gush Shalom, had accepted to speak in the Meeting, but felt that under the prevailing circumstances he should not interrupt his activities in the Israeli peace camp. He sent a paper that was distributed to the participants.

5. The Meeting was attended by 52 representatives of 34 civil society organizations from different regions of the world. Representatives of 16 Member States, Palestine, one intergovernmental organization, and five United Nations entities also participated as observers.

6. During the lunch break, the organizers screened the film "Promises", an Oscar-nominated documentary directed by Justine Shapiro, B.Z. Goldberg and Carlos Bolado.

7. At the close of the Meeting, the participants adopted an NGO Statement and Plan of Action (see annex I). The Urgent Appeal submitted by the participating NGOs to the above-mentioned International Meeting is attached (see annex II).

II. Opening statement

8. **Ravan A.G. Farhâdi**, Vice-Chairman of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, stated that solidarity with and support for the Palestinian cause by the international community was of paramount importance for a just and lasting solution of the question of Palestine. He said that the stern disparity in the balance of power between the parties made it imperative that the Palestinian people could continue to count on the support by Governments, intergovernmental and civil society organizations. He drew attention to the international activists who were risking their lives in Palestinian cities under siege in order to provide a human shield. In cases where parliamentarians from European countries joined the protests, the action would receive wide media attention and have an impact on European public opinion. He noted that religious organizations were also playing an increasingly active role on the ground, as well as within their constituencies abroad. Many church groups and secular organizations were planning to maintain a permanent presence in the Occupied Palestinian Territory in order to facilitate a more sustained and effective action. He also pointed to the strengthening voices of protest within Israel against the Government's policy in the Occupied Palestinian Territory,

including Jerusalem. Israeli organizations that supported a complete Israeli withdrawal from the Occupied Palestinian Territory were standing up courageously against prevailing public opinion and found more and more supporters among the Israeli mainstream.

9. Mr. Farhâdi said that that there was a greater need for sustained campaigns aimed at informing public opinion about the root causes of the conflict and the legitimate rights of the parties and promoting national and international action in support of effective steps to end the crisis and to resume negotiations. Given the current dangerous situation, particular attention should be given to mobilizing wide support for measures to protect the Palestinian people. Governments should be encouraged through parliaments, NGOs and public opinion to take immediate and effective steps to uphold the Fourth Geneva Convention and to live up to the Declaration regarding the Occupied Palestinian Territory unanimously adopted by the High Contracting Parties last December in Geneva. In the months to come, civil society should support initiatives mounted with a view to restoring a political process that would eventually lead the parties back to the negotiating table. Providing emergency relief and other assistance to the Palestinian people and rehabilitating the devastated Palestinian economy should be another important priority for civil society work.

10. Mr. Farhâdi said that in the period ahead, much of the success of NGO endeavours would depend on their ability to mobilize the broadest possible constituencies for specific initiatives. He drew attention to a web site for NGOs active on the issue maintained by the Division for Palestinian Rights of the United Nations Secretariat. He said that the web site, with useful features such as the NGO Action News and the Calendar of Events, had the potential to become the bulletin board of civil society action in support of a just and lasting solution of the question of Palestine.

III. Plenary sessions

Plenary I
The role of civil society in time of crisis

11. Presentations in this plenary focused on the participation of Palestinian and Israeli civil society organizations in the peace efforts, people-to-people diplomacy – building bridges of understanding and trust, strengthening NGO networks in time of crisis, and development of action-oriented proposals and mechanisms for their implementation.

12. **Salwa Hudeib**, Chair of the Board of Trustees of the Jerusalem Centre for Women, discussed the Palestinian and Israeli women's peace initiatives, citing her experience with the Jerusalem Link, a coordinating body between a Palestinian women's group, the Jerusalem Centre for Women in East Jerusalem, and an Israeli women's group, Bat Shalom in West Jerusalem. She said that the progressive thinking of feminism on both sides had geared the process of political dialogue towards one of building trust and creative thinking. Both had aimed to move towards a joint vision for peacemaking. Agreed-upon political principles had constituted the basis for institutionalized cooperation, such as the Jerusalem Link, and joint initiatives.

13. Ms. Hudeib said that at the moment, emotions were very tense on the Palestinian side due to the rapid increase in the number of the dead and injured. As a result, the Palestinian side had given a clear message to its Israeli counterpart that a measure of trust-building must come from the Israeli side. She said that all joint projects and activities had been suspended since the start of the intifada in September 2000, while dialogue on the board members level was still taking place whenever necessary. She said her Centre was seeking to reach an agreement over political principles without any room for misinterpretations. Only then could joint activities be resumed and new strategies be defined by both parties.

14. **Hannah Safran**, Co-founder of the Coalition of Women for a Just Peace, introduced a series of activities organized by her Coalition, composed of nine Israeli women's organizations, both Jewish and Arab. She said that the Coalition had focused in the early phase of the second intifada on actions against the Israeli closure of Palestinian areas. As the first action, women had blocked the entrance of the Ministry of Defence to demonstrate the reality of the closures. They had gathered to remove roadblocks and reconstruct destroyed roads in and around Palestinian towns and villages. Women had also provided human shields, by lying down in front of bulldozers and roping themselves to olive trees. Many of these activists had ended up arrested. The Coalition had designated 8 June 2001, the 34th anniversary of the occupation of the Palestinian territories, as an international "Women in Black" day. Three thousand women had attended a vigil held in East Jerusalem on the day, and 150 vigils had been held around the world in response to the Coalition's call. Although these events had drawn a fair degree of attention from the Arab and international media, they had not been covered by the Israeli media.

15. Ms. Safran said that the Israeli public had recently started to realize the important role of civil society organizations. However, the organizations themselves had not fully realized their potential and utilized the power they had. The nine members had established the Coalition in the belief that working together would enable them to become visible and influence public opinion. She said that building a coalition demanded good will as well as patience and understanding. Members of a coalition did not need to agree on every point to take action together. She emphasized that differences were not always obstacles but could be a source of power.

Plenary II
Action by international civil society in support of the Palestinian people

16. Speakers in this plenary focused on mobilizing support for the resumption of the Israeli-Palestinian peace dialogue – review of NGO action on national, regional and international levels, international NGOs on the ground – objectives and obstacles, emergency relief and humanitarian assistance – efforts by civil society to maintain and improve the living conditions on the ground, building capacities on the economic, social and civil levels among Palestinians, and development of action-oriented proposals and mechanisms for their implementation.

17. **Theocharis Papamargaris**, President of the Greek Committee for International Democratic Solidarity and Vice-Chairman of the European Coordinating Committee for NGOs on the Question of Palestine (ECCP), read out a letter from Mr. Pierre Galand, Chairman of the ECCP, addressed to the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People. The letter said that European coordination under the auspices of the ECCP had led to an intensive programme of raising public awareness and political lobbying in support of the Palestinian people. He referred to the European-Mediterranean civil society conferences, the latest of which had been held from 12 to 14 April 2002, and said that those conferences had adopted a wide-ranging plan of action and resolutions in support of the Palestinian people. The ECCP had also organized a number of missions to the Occupied Palestinian Territory, which had allowed the mobilization of a broad international movement for sending civilian observers and groups to protect the Palestinian people.

18. The letter said further that the ECCP was receiving the increasing support of very broad sectors of European public opinion, as shown by the growing number of mass demonstrations. Parliamentarians, both at the regional level and at the national and European levels, were rendering their support to the ECCP and calling on their Governments to intervene to ensure that the aggression against the Palestinians was halted. He said that Israel's attitude and the complicity it enjoyed in the West were endangering all of the work that had been done by civil society on both sides of the Mediterranean to build coexistence, cooperation and security throughout the Mediterranean rim. In addition to the European Parliament's resolution adopted on 10 April 2002 calling for the suspension of the EU-Israel Association Agreement,

an embargo on arms shipments to Israel and the sending of a buffer force and international observers, the letter said other measures could include the suspension of scientific, technical and cultural cooperation agreements between European States and Israel as long as it failed to abide by international law and refused to withdraw from all the Occupied Palestinian Territory.

19. Mr. Papamargaris concluded emphasizing that the Israeli aggressions against the Palestinian people could not have been sustained without the support of the United States and the European Union Governments, and therefore European and North American civil society's action should be focused on exposing the responsibilities of the US and the EU for the sufferings of the Palestinian people. He insisted that, as long as the Israeli Government continued its brutal policies towards the Palestinian people, it should be treated in the same manner the apartheid regime of South Africa had been treated by the international community.

20. **Morad Ghaleb**, President of the Afro-Asian Peoples' Solidarity Organization (AAPSO) in Cairo, said that Israel did not pay attention to any voices of the international community appealing for a halt to the campaign of aggression and to the resolutions of the United Nations. Israel paid no heed to the voices of the thousands and even millions of demonstrators that filled the streets of the world's capitals appealing to the human conscience for intervention. This international support and solidarity had been joined by the voices of international human rights organizations, including Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International, as well as the International Committee of the Red Cross, the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), the United Nations Commission on Human Rights and other international non-governmental organizations.

21. Mr. Ghaleb said that Israel would never succeed in transforming the Palestine question into an issue of terrorism so as to eliminate and terminate the question. The worst form of terrorism was that of a State heavily armed with the most lethal and sophisticated weapons against a people seeking its freedom and independence with the support of dozens of international resolutions and of international legitimacy. The issue passed over in silence was that of the Israeli occupation of the Palestinian territories, inasmuch as a people under occupation and one that was disparaged and humiliated was supposed not to resist occupation, humiliation and disparagement, and if it resisted then it was engaging in terrorism.

22. He called for the readiness of the United Nations and all its relevant organs, especially the Security Council, to counter Israel's rejections of Security Council resolutions by imposing the necessary sanctions, including the application of Chapter VII of the Charter of the United Nations. He insisted that the international community should reveal true facts about what Israel had done during its military operations in Jenin and other Palestinian areas in order to mobilize public opinion in support of the Palestinian cause. He said that AAPSO would seek to reflect the attitudes of international public opinion and the views of international civil society in an endeavour to restore to the organs of international legitimacy, headed by the United Nations, their credibility as the allies and defenders of the legitimate rights of vulnerable peoples.

23. **Mercia Andrews**, President of the South African NGO Coalition (SANGOCO), said that after the World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance held in Durban in August 2001, South Africans' support for the Palestinian cause had grown further and the South African Palestine Solidarity Movement had been formed. The actions and initiatives of the Movement were very grassroots linked and based. She referred to obvious parallels between Israel and Apartheid South Africa. Like Israel, South Africa had enjoyed the protection and support of powerful countries despite the apartheid. Like today, the South African Liberation Movement had been asked to renounce violence, to stop terrorism, to disarm themselves, while the actions of the South African Army had gone unchecked. Like today, world leaders had been reluctant to implement sanctions, to cut diplomatic ties and to suspend membership in the United Nations bodies.

24. Ms. Andrews said that Israel's disrespect of the international community and UN resolutions could be altered only if the pressure from below gained momentum and people began to exert pressure on the respective Governments to act decisively. As had been the case for South Africa, there was a great need for an international campaign to isolate Israel. The campaign had to gain broad mass support and draw in all layers of society to implement different aspects of the campaign to isolate Israel. It was important to pressure every labour movement throughout the world to boycott Israeli goods until Israel changed its policies. Another critical lesson from the South African movement was that every platform and opportunity must be used to achieve the broadest possible movement of solidarity, involving people all over the world regardless of race, religion and nationality. It was also important to let the voices from villages and schools and the dreams of the youth and women be heard by the world.

25. **Don Betz**, Chairman of the International Coordinating Committee for NGOs on the Question of Palestine (ICCP), pointed out that beyond prejudice and the stereotyping of Palestinians, Arabs and Muslims, the preponderant majority of people, especially in the United States, did not know the origins of the conflict. An example of the American public's misunderstanding about the conflict was that Palestinians were the aggressors and it was Israel that was defending its homeland from a maniacal and bloodthirsty people, all of whom were terrorists. In the United States, leading national public officials and TV news anchors rarely asked the questions about the root causes of the intifada or the reasons for the conflict. He said, however, that when the realities of the question of Palestine were effectively communicated, the mainstream public could comprehend what was happening. When they had a sense of the occupation and the reasons why Palestinians had resisted for three generations, the public could realize that the status quo could not stand if peace was the actual goal.

26. Mr. Betz said that the tragic events of 11 September 2001 had propelled the question of Palestine onto centre stage of popular discussion. The global public, especially in the US, was asking questions it had not raised before, about the occupation, the historical background of the Palestinian question and the possible resolution of the conflict. The mainstream public was ready to understand, perhaps for the first time, the stark reality of the question of Palestine. This was a teachable moment, a true global learning opportunity, with major implications for any sustained peace initiative. A practical immediate plan of action should include a comprehensive, coordinated and lasting campaign of information to provide the public with an accurate depiction of the Israeli occupation and of the legitimate Palestinian resistance. Now was the time for the United Nations, Member States and NGOs to actively collaborate once again and tell the story of Palestine as if for the first time. Mr. Betz recommended that Palestinian, Arab and other organizations send to the United States spokespersons with an extensive knowledge of the media to explain the Palestinian cause to the American public in its language.

27. In the ensuing discussion, the representative of Palestine read out a letter from **Archimandrite Attallah Hanna**, Spokesperson for the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate in Jerusalem, addressed to the Meeting. The letter said that the lack of stability and true peace in the region was a direct result of the occupation. Peace could not exist without the full restoration of the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people. What was happening now on Palestinian land was a humanitarian disaster, in which the Palestinian people were deprived of the most basic human rights. The silence of the world had reached the extent of conspiracy, and it had provided Israel with a shield to perpetrate organized State terrorism against a people seeking freedom, liberty and independence. The Palestinian liberation movement should be distinguished from the terrorism that the world rejected. Resistance was a duty of all those who suffered from occupation. The letter urged the world community to rescue and liberate the Palestinian people from the shackles of occupation.

28. The representative of the **Indo-Arab Friendship Association** called for the holding of an emergency session of the General Assembly and its adoption of a new resolution on behalf of the Security Council, which was blocked by vetoes. The representative of the **Cyprus Solidarity Committee with**

the Arab People said that because of the similar situation in Cyprus, the people of Cyprus were in solidarity with the Palestinian people, and that was well represented by a resolution passed unanimously by the Parliament calling for an immediate withdrawal of the Israeli troops from the Occupied Palestinian Territory and for just peace in the region. He said that no one was strong enough to stand against all people of the world, and that efforts to combat the misinformation and conspiracy of silence must be reinforced. To make a difference, public opinion should be mobilized and people's feeling of inability altered.

29. The representative of the **Egyptian United Nations Association** said that Chapter VII of the Charter of the United Nations should be invoked against Israel as it was clearly not respecting UN resolutions and the Charter, and that similar measures adopted by the United Nations against the racist policies of South Africa should be taken today with regard to Israel. He called upon the General Assembly to take over the responsibilities in preserving international peace and security in the case where the Security Council was unable to bear the responsibilities, and insisted that measures be taken to put those responsible for war crimes on trial in an international tribunal. The representative of the **Portuguese Council for Peace and Cooperation** said that the target of civil society's actions should be not only the Israeli Government but also the United States Administration and called for a moral uprising of world public opinion. He suggested that European NGOs urgently organize a conference and invite as many North American NGOs as possible to it in order to examine possible ways to affect the current United States policy towards the conflict.

30. The representative of the **World Federation of Democratic Youth** expressed opposition to the propaganda in Israel and the United States that tried to brand any attempts to defend the defenceless people as terrorism and that justified the atrocities in the Occupied Palestinian Territory as an attempt to defend the Israelis from terrorism. The representative of the **Presbyterian Church USA** expressed his organization's commitment to raise the awareness of the American public. He pointed out that a huge amount of money was contributed by Israel-supporting organizations for the election of representatives to Congress and said that the grassroots movements in the United States needed to be aware of this fact. He said that NGOs should call upon their own constituencies to rise up against the atrocities, based on information, awareness and moral values, and called for every effort to be made to expose the occupation as the ultimate form of violence and terrorism.

31. The representative of the **World Peace Council** in Greece said that the hypocrisy could no longer hide the responsibilities for the non-implementation of the UN resolutions and the military support for Israel. He regretted that measures taken by the international community against Yugoslavia in the case of Kosovo were not being applied to Israel. The representative of the **Arab Lawyers Union** said that the United States mediation in its current form was no longer enough to end the violence. He urged the General Assembly to convene a special session and adopt a new resolution formulating a new solution that would not be prevented by vetoes. The representative of the **World YWCA** drew the attention to the destruction of public and civil society institutions in the Occupied Palestinian Territory and emphasized the urgent need to rebuild them with international assistance.

32. The representative of **Campaign for Children of Palestine** (Japan) highlighted the situation of Palestine refugees in Lebanon, whose harsh living conditions in overpopulated camps drew little attention by the media. She stressed that those refugees must never be ignored when the settlement of the question of Palestine was discussed. The representative of **Association Najdeh** working in and around refugee camps in Lebanon said that what she had experienced in Lebanon in 1982 was being repeated in the Occupied Palestinian Territory today. She also said that when the rights of Palestinians were discussed, the right of refugees to return based on General Assembly resolution 194 (III) should always be reflected.

III. Closing statement

33. **Ravan A.G. Farhâdi**, Vice-Chairman of the Committee, welcoming the adoption of the NGO Statement and Plan of Action, stressed that the challenge ahead was to ensure that visions would become reality. He said that the Committee, with the assistance of the Division for Palestinian Rights, was fully committed to support NGOs in their endeavours. The Committee would continue to organize meetings aimed at mobilizing organizations in a specific region or on a wider international scale. The Committee would also continue to provide NGOs, through the NGO web site maintained by the Division for Palestinian Rights, with information on United Nations assessments and action and on important activities of organizations worldwide. He stated that he hoped to receive from the NGO side more information about their activities in order to enhance mutual cooperation between the Committee and civil society.

ANNEX I

NGO STATEMENT AND PLAN OF ACTION

1. We NGOs from around the world gathered together in Nicosia, Cyprus, at a moment of grave peril for the Palestinian people. Over the past eight weeks, Israel and its military forces have systematically destroyed the Palestinian Authority and the Palestinian economic, political, social, religious and health care infrastructure, and crippled its ability to offer essential services to its people. The full extent of the trauma and casualties suffered by the people is yet to be discovered, but the consequences for Palestinian men, women and children are extreme.

2. Our Meeting is taking place at a time when, following Secretary of State Colin Powell's failed mission to the Middle East, the Israeli Government is relaunching and aggravating its criminal aggression against the Palestinian Authority and the Palestinian people. We underline the responsibility of the United States Administration in the present, most dangerous turn of events and escalation of war in the Middle East. We consider the stand of the European Union so far in this regard as insufficient. The EU must take a coherent, effective and independent stand. We appeal to Arab Governments to take much stronger and concrete measures in support of the Palestinian people and the Palestinian Authority.

3. The denial of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people and the continued occupation and aggression were and remain at the root of injustices and violence. We condemn this Israeli occupation and all its related policies.

4. The importance of an international presence for the protection of the Palestinian civilian population in the Occupied Palestinian Territory cannot be overestimated. As NGOs, we pledge to utilize all of our resources, contacts and strategies to augment public awareness of the living conditions of the Palestinian people on the ground. We salute and express our thanks to and our solidarity with all the NGOs currently assisting Palestinians on the ground and those activists who have been denied entry into the Occupied Palestinian Territory.

5. We call for the full implementation of Security Council resolutions 1397 (2002), 1402 (2002) and 1403 (2002) as a global response to the political and humanitarian crisis in the Occupied Territory that is now only beginning to be fully understood. The international community must stop allowing Israel to be treated as a State above international law and respect for human rights and values.

6. We NGOs express our continuing support for the elected Palestinian leadership. We call for the immediate lifting of the siege of Chairman Arafat and the Palestinian Authority's headquarters.

7. The Israeli occupation itself is an act of violence against Palestinians, and it must end now. Therefore, we support the right of the Palestinian people to resist the brutal Israeli occupation and protect themselves and their children, according to international law and resolutions. Only the end of occupation and aggression can bring about the end of this tragic and senseless loss of the lives of so many innocent civilians.

8. We note with considerable interest the increasing NGO work worldwide in response to the invasion of the West Bank. We urge the United Nations to make renewed efforts to collaborate with NGOs active worldwide in order to enhance global coordination of their efforts and effective dissemination of information about their activities.

9. As fellow NGOs, we note with appreciation the efforts of the Israeli peace movement and the central role of women in the NGO movement in support of the Palestinian people. We acknowledge those Israeli soldiers and reservists who refuse to take part in the aggression against the Palestinian population.

10. We urge all international NGOs to work together with their counterparts in the United States to mobilize world public opinion to demand that the United States Administration cease its support for the Israeli Government's policy of war, terror and annihilation of the Palestinian people and of the Palestinian Authority.

11. We mobilize our collective efforts on behalf of the Palestinian people, as we have done since 1983, on the basis of relevant UN resolutions, in particular General Assembly resolutions 181 (II) and 194 (III), and Security Council resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973), 1397 (2002), 1402 (2002) and 1403 (2002). We remain convinced that these resolutions offer the clearest pathway to a true and lasting peace for all in the region.

12. We acknowledge the results of the United Nations International Meeting in Support of Middle East Peace, held in Nicosia on 16 and 17 April 2002. We urge the United Nations and its Member States to do much more and focus on action to protect the Palestinian people.

13. Drawing attention to the attached NGO Appeal presented to the above-mentioned International Meeting (see annex II), we consider it to be a complementary part of the following Plan of Action.

The Plan of Action

(a) We call for the immediate withdrawal of all Israeli forces from Palestinian towns, villages and camps, as well as from all the occupied territories to the borders of 1967. We urge the United States Government to apply its influence with the Government of Israel to bring about immediate compliance.

(b) We call for the immediate establishment of an international presence on the ground in the West Bank and Gaza to protect the civilian population, to provide independent observation of the situation there and to submit reports to the international community via the United Nations.

(c) We unanimously urge that any international conferences or negotiations on the Middle East include official Palestinian Authority representatives headed by its president, Mr. Yasser Arafat.

(d) We call for relief, rehabilitation and development assistance in all its forms to be extended by the international community to the Palestinian Authority and to the Palestinian people as soon as possible.

(e) We are particularly concerned about UNRWA, ICRC and other humanitarian agencies. NGOs - Palestinian, Israeli and international - all agree that there should be a concerted international campaign geared towards donor Governments to support UNRWA and other agencies in the aftermath of Israeli destruction of their ability to assist the Palestinian people.

(f) We hold the Israeli Government responsible for the suffering and deprivation of the Palestinian people under occupation. Israel must pay reparations for all damages inflicted on Palestinian property.

(g) We call upon all NGOs to lobby their Governments and mobilize public opinion in solidarity with the Palestinian people. We call for renewed and increased public demonstrations around the world in support of the Palestinian people, in front of the Israeli and United States Embassies. We urge the international community, including Governments and NGOs, to extend every material and humanitarian assistance to the Palestinian people in this hour of critical need.

(h) We call upon all Governments, international bodies and civil society organizations to exert pressure on the Government of Israel to end the occupation and aggression against the Palestinian people. This pressure includes arms embargoes and sanctions on trade, sports and cultural links.

(i) We recognize the importance of public information campaigns in the United States and other countries to favourably impact pubic opinion. Therefore, we will use our network contacts to share useful and effective information for public dissemination through the media and our organizations. The focus should be on "making the occupation visible" and "perspectives on the Israeli invasion of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip".

(j) We call upon all communities, especially religious communities and institutions, to rise in moral indignation against the atrocities committed against the Palestinian people.

(k) As NGOs active on the question of Palestine, we urge UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan to visit the Occupied Palestinian Territory soon and to urge the international community to assist the Palestinian people. The UN should use all means to ensure the implementation of all resolutions relating to the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people.

(l) We reissue our request articulated in Madrid in July 2001 for a United Nations International NGO Meeting on the Protection of the Palestinian People. The holding of this meeting is important and would allow NGOs to concentrate on this one aspect of their mutual collaboration as well as their interaction with the UN. We ask that the UN and other organizations financially assist NGOs to participate in order to ensure broad representation of the international NGO community active on the question of Palestine.

(m) We appeal to the world media to be more supportive of justice, freedom and peace, and stand by the victims and the oppressed.

We NGOs present at this Meeting in Nicosia express our sincere appreciation to the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People and the Division for Palestinian Rights of the UN Secretariat for organizing the Meeting. We thank the Government and people of Cyprus for their memorable hospitality. On this occasion, we extend to the people of Cyprus our NGO support for a peaceful solution of the Cypriot problem based on relevant UN resolutions in the interests of peace and stability in the region.

Nicosia, 18 April 2002

ANNEX II

URGENT APPEAL BY NGOs PARTICIPATING IN THE UNITED NATIONS INTERNATIONAL MEETING IN SUPPORT OF MIDDLE EAST PEACE Nicosia, 16 and 17 April 2002

As NGOs, who represent civil society in all its diversity, we believe in a world where the right to live in peace, equity, tolerance and justice is the right of all people. This is our dream for Palestine.

The current situation in the Middle East is explosive and dangerous. The Palestinians have the inalienable right to live in their own sovereign State. All relevant United Nations resolutions must be implemented, including General Assembly resolution 194 (III) recognizing the right of return. Ending the Israeli occupation of the Palestinian and other Arab territories, which is responsible for the violence in the region, is the only way to achieve peace in the Middle East.

1. We demand the immediate lifting of the siege on the Palestinian President, Yasser Arafat, so that he is able to execute his duties as the legitimate and elected leader of the Palestinian people.

2. We call for the immediate withdrawal of Israeli troops from the Palestinian and other Arab territories occupied in 1967 and the lifting of all closures and checkpoints.

3. A UN peacekeeping and monitoring force must be sent immediately to the Occupied Palestinian Territory so as to protect the civilian population from further assaults.

4. All humanitarian aid workers and NGOs should be given immediate access to the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. We call upon all countries to offer financial support for emergency relief efforts. Humanitarian help should be directed both to the urgent and immediate needs of the people and to the rebuilding of infrastructure.

5. Independent teams of lawyers must have access to all detainees and political prisoners.

6. An independent, third-party investigative comm ission should be formed immediately to investigate the destruction of the West Bank and Gaza Strip infrastructure, the killing of civilians and other crimes committed by Israeli military forces. Israeli authorities should allow unconditional access to the parties so that the voices of victims can be heard and documented.

7. The United States Administration must immediately cease its continuing direct and indirect support of the policy of occupation, aggression, terror and war pursued by the Israeli Government, and cease its current policy of undermining the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people to freedom and independence.

8. The European Union must stop procrastinating and implement sanctions against the policy of terror and war of the Israeli Government, and bring effective, concrete, humanitarian assistance to the Palestinian people and the Palestinian Authority.

9. The United Nations, especially the Security Council, must take immediate measures to compel the Israeli Government to accept and implement all relevant United Nations resolutions.

10. Mr. Sharon and the members of his cabinet responsible for the war crimes committed against the Palestinian people must be put on trial in an international tribunal.

11. Unless and until the Israeli Government complies with the above points, the international community must isolate Israel politically, diplomatically, culturally and economically as a way to force a resolution of the crisis.

ANNEX III

LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

Speakers

Ms. Mercia Andrews
President, South African National NGO Coalition (SANGOCO)
Pretoria

Mr. Don Betz
Chairman, International Coordinating Committee for NGOs on the Question of Palestine (ICCP)
Oklahoma

Mr. Morad Ghaleb
President, Afro-Asian Peoples' Solidarity Organization (AAPSO)
Cairo

Ms. Salwa Hudeib
Chair of the Board of Trustees, Jerusalem Centre for Women
Jerusalem

Mr. Theocharis Papamargaris
Vice-Chairman, European Coordinating Committee for NGOs on the Question of Palestine (ECCP)
President, Greek Committee for International Democratic Solidarity
Athens

Ms. Hannah Safran
Co-founder, Coalition of Women for a Just Peace
Haifa

Speakers at the International Meeting in Support of Middle East Peace
Nicosia, 16 and 17 April 2002

Ms. Karen Koning AbuZayd
Deputy Commissioner-General
United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA)
Gaza

Mr. Seth Ackerman
Media Analyst, Fairness and Accuracy in Reporting (FAIR)
New York

Ms. Areti Demosthenous
Director, Institute of Historical Research for Peace
Lecturer, University of Cyprus
Nicosia

Mr. Steingrimur Hermansson
Chairman of the Board of Trustees, Millennium Institute
Former Prime Minister of Iceland
Reykjavik

Mr. Joseph S. Joseph
Associate Professor of Political Science and International Relations, Deputy Dean of the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, University of Cyprus
Nicosia

Mr. Markus Kaim
Professor of Political Science, Friedrich Schiller University
Jena, Germany

Mr. Peretz Kidron
Journalist, peace activist
Jerusalem

Mr. Oleg Ozerov
Deputy Chief, Middle East Peace Process Division, Department of the Middle East and North Africa, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation
Moscow

Mr. Nabil Shaath
Minister for Planning and International Cooperation, Palestinian Authority; Representative of Palestine
Gaza

Mr. Hanna Siniora
Publisher, *The Jerusalem Times* (BILADI)
Jerusalem

Sir Cyril Townsend
Director, Council for the Advancement of Arab-British Understanding (CAABU)
London

Ms. Hadas Ziv
Director of Projects, Physicians for Human Rights - Israel
Tel Aviv

Non-governmental organizations

Afro-Asian Peoples' Solidarity Organization (AAPSO)
Arab Lawyers Union
Arab Resource Collective (ARC)
Association Najdeh
Campaign for Children of Palestine
Centre for World Dialogue
Coalition of Women for a Just Peace
Comité Internacional de Rescate (CIR)
Conselho Português para Paz e Cooperação (Portuguese Council for Peace and Cooperation)
Council for the Advancement of Arab-British Understanding (CAABU)

Cyprus-Palestine Active Solidarity
Cyprus Peace Council
Cyprus Solidarity Committee with the Arab People
Egyptian Solidarity Committee
Egyptian United Nations Association
European Coordinating Committee for NGOs on the Question of Palestine (ECCP)
Greek Committee for International Democracy
Greek Committee for International Détente and Peace
Indo-Arab Friendship Association
International Coordinating Committee for NGOs on the Question of Palestine (ICCP)
Jerusalem Centre for Women
National Peace Foundation
NGO Service Centre
Pancyprian Federation of Women's Organization (POGO)
Physicians for Human Rights - Israel
Presbyterian Church (USA)
Rosa Luxemburg Foundation
Society for Austro-Arab Relations
South African National NGO Coalition (SANGOCO)
United Nations Association of Cyprus
World Federation of Democratic Youth
World Peace Council (WPC)
World YWCA
Yesh Gvul

Observers

Fairness and Accuracy in Reporting (FAIR)

Delegation of the Committee on the Exercise
of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People

H.E. Mr. Ravan A.G. Farhâdi	Permanent Representative of Afghanistan to the United Nations, Vice-Chairman of the Committee
H.E. Mr. Bruno Rodriguez Parrilla	Permanent Representative of Cuba to the United Nations, Vice-Chairman of the Committee
H.E. Mr. Sotirios Zackheos	Permanent Representative of Cyprus to the United Nations

Observer Member States

Afghanistan, Argentina, Brazil, Cuba, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Egypt, France, Germany, Hungary, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Japan, Kazakhstan, Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, Lithuania, Philippines, Portugal, Thailand, Tunisia

Entities having received a standing invitation to participate as observers in the sessions and the work of the General Assembly and maintaining permanent observer missions at Headquarters

Palestine

Intergovernmental organizations

Organization of the Islamic Conference

United Nations organs, agencies and bodies

Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA)
United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP)
United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO)
United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA)
United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA)

Media

Alespoea Newspaper & Abu Dhabi TV
Cyprus Broadcasting Corporation
Cyprus News Agency